General Robert W. RisCassi, Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command (CINCUNC), CINC of the Combined Forces Command (CINCCFC) and Commander of US Forces Korea (COMUSFK)

The Korean Theater—One-of-a-Kind

Interview by Patrecia Slayden Hollis, Managing Editor

What is the threat the Combined Forces Command (CFC) faces in Korea?

A considerable one. North Korea now has the fourth largest military in the world with more than 65 percent of its active forces in attack positions within 100 kilometers of the DMZ [demilitarized zone]. They're arrayed in four combined arms frontal corps, two artillery corps, two heavy tactical exploitation corps and three heavy operational corps (Figure 1 on Page 8).

Were North Korea to attack, it could do so with great speed in the hopes of achieving and exploiting strategic and operational surprise. It would be a firepower-intensive assault with the north employing its large artillery forces to attempt to pulverize the south's defense, its frontal corps to develop a breach and, then, its exploitation forces to exploit the penetration.

There are seven traditional north-south attack corridors that canalize attacking forces. These confine attacking columns to relatively constricted corridors of advance. They make the north's challenge of synchronizing an attack all the more difficult and its forces seriously vulnerable to interdiction. For its artillery, the fact that the terrain is more than 70 percent mountainous makes targeting and fires more difficult and complex.

Success against such an attack would depend on our skillfully using the terrain, exploiting the coalition's advanced systems, employing the CFC's superior air and naval forces and rapidly augmenting with ROK [Republic of Korea] reserves and US forces from out of theater.

Please describe the CFC's joint and combined organization and how it operates. What aspects of the CFC are unique?

First, it's important to understand the CFC is the largest standing military coalition in which the US participates. Unlike NATO, most of the South Korean active military forces are OPCON to [under the operational control of] the coalition commander...the CFC commander. That's

because the North Koreans have the advantage of a larger force they can mass vertically in multiple corridors against South Korea, and therefore, the CFC must have a defensive alliance capable of concentrating all available combat power, regardless of nationality.

CFC is bilateral from top to bottom (Figure 2 on Page 9). At the theater level, staffs are joint and combined. Tactical joint forces are task organized functionally to receive command and control from a unified command. There are no US or ROK sectors—only a combined battlefield. When the command is task organized for battle, some American tactical units will be OPCON to ROK commanders and vice versa.

Because of the nature of the North Korean threat and the terrain upon which a war would be fought, South Korea's combined defense must be seamless. Korean and American units must rely on each other for too many battlefield functions to allow national divisions to artificially separate one from another.

As CFC commander, what are your command and control challenges?

The challenges run the gamut from differences in language or culture—which lead to misunderstandings—to having common C^4I [command, control, communications, computer and intelligence] from the tactical through theater levels.

None of these are "stationary" challenges. Every time the US or the Republic of Korea introduces a new piece of communications gear or Fort Leavenworth [Kansas] or the US Joint Staff invents a new doctrinal phrase, it brings a new challenge to ensure our command and control will work smoothly and efficiently. Every time the North Korean Army adds new equipment, reorganizes or forms another unit, we must reevaluate and, potentially, change our operations. We review our theater plans annually to capture these changes and maintain communications systemically.

The only way to combat these challenges is through frequent exercises that stress our systems to see if they're working correctly. By concentrating on the battlefield operating systems [BOSs], we take a critical look at both the results of our systems and the decision apparatus that produces those results.

With the 2d Infantry Division's Third Brigade a ROK Army brigade and with US units under the operational command of a ROK Army corps, what are the US support, sustainment and interoperability challenges?

Because of unique equipment and the need for units to train habitually with their organic support elements, we receive the ROK Army brigade in the division with its own support package. Ideally, our coalition partner would buy 100 percent American, making our combined support, sustainment and interoperability infinitely easier. But technology transfers can be sensitive, so the South Koreans also buy arms in the ever-growing international market place or make their own,

based on their requirements. Having different equipment isn't impossible to deal with, but we'd like to mitigate that effect on the battlefield.

Creating a relationship between the division and its ROK Army corps headquarters isn't as complex, in many respects. The division continues to draw its support from US Forces Korea and its component, Eighth Army. It's OPCON to the corps, and therefore, the command and control relationship is for the operational employment and direction of the division.

However, we still watch carefully to ensure that interoperability problems don't cause dysfunction. There are equipment differences in communications, fire support control and in many other areas—the control network—that have to be bridged. Bilingual personnel are assigned to critical nodes to ensure clear lateral and horizontal communications, and where necessary, liaison officers are assigned.

The keys to making these arrangements work are first, a cooperative and enthusiastic attitude by all concerned and, second, a training program that continuously tests and refines unit procedures. I believe we have both, and if these organizations must fight, they'll operate smoothly and extremely effectively together.

In the 2d Infantry Division's recent battle command training program (BCTP), it participated as part of the ROK Army VII Corps—a first. What lessons did they learn or validate that are applicable to operations throughout CFC or other combined commands?

The most fundamental lesson is the need for allies to share a common understanding of doctrine—I can't overemphasize the importance of having common doctrine in combined operations. Doctrine is the professional language with which we communicate with one another in battle to describe command relationships, mission statements and plans. Unless we talk the same technical language, there will be a great deal of unwelcome friction. The division and its corps headquarters understood this before the BCTP exercise, and it was revalidated.

The second point is that it's difficult to sustain a rapid decision cycle in combined operations—much more difficult than when operating alone. Even the most common tasks, such as sharing intelligence, must await translation before data can be passed throughout the command. This, in turn, slows the development of a plan, which, in turn, slows the other elements of the decision cycle. Even minute differences in how we plan or organize our plans can lead to untimeliness.

The last lesson is that BCTP is invaluable for preparing coalition forces to fight together—in welding them together. In fact, the ROK armed forces have been so impressed with BCTP that they're building their own BCTP capability.

Please describe the exercise Ulchi-Focus Lens and unique aspects of the training.

Our theater training program is based on a CFC white paper for joint and combined doctrine, allowing subordinate commands to incorporate into their levels of training those tasks, procedures and requirements outlined as critical in the paper. This combined doctrine is vital because it creates a level of understanding in both national forces that leads to decentralized preparation and training. Our exercises then build on this training and focus on theater-level tasks.

Ulchi-Focus Lens was a theater simulation-based exercise that involved nearly all the active Korean armed forces, the forward deployed forces of the USFK [US Forces Korea] and a large number of the US units that would augment Korea in the event of a crisis or conflict.

The host for the exercise was our automated theater bilingual command and control system, TACCIMS [tactical command and control information management system], paired with our theater exercise and simulation center. We conducted the exercise through computer links with the Warrior Preparation Center in Germany and simulation centers at Fort Lewis [Washington] and Fort Leavenworth—a first using satellite communications channels in the distributed wargaming network that linked three continents. This enabled us to expand participation and improve the scenario base.

At the same time, we successfully prototyped a DARPA [Defense Advanced Research Projects, Arlington, Virginia] interface that, for the first time, bridged three services' warfighting models, including the Navy's RESA [research and evaluation systems analysis], the Air Force's AWSIM [air warfare simulation] and our own CBS [corps battle simulation] exploded up to the theater level. In addition, the JECEWSI [joint electronic combat/electronic warfare simulation] and the logistics TTSM [theater transition sustainment model] played in Ulchi Focus. We had a worldwide network of joint models supporting a theater war plan, the viability of which was being examined under CBS through TACCIMS, with all joint battles fought simultaneously.

The bridge between the war plan and TACCIMS was the theater decision support system, or TDSS, which we developed

Total Active Forces	***1,206,000***
Ground Forces	
Active Duty Personnel	1,066,000
Reserve Personnel	5,000,000
Conventional Corps	8
Mechanized Corps	4
Combat Divisions/Separate Brigades	70
Combat Maneuver Battalions	700
Special Operations Forces (SOF) Brigades	22
SOF Personnel	80,000
Medium Tanks	3,500
Light/Amphibious Tanks	400
Assault Guns	200
Armored Personnel Carriers	4,000
Self-Propelled Artillery	5,400
Towed Field Artillery	3,000
Multiple Rocket Launchers	2,400
Anti-Aircraft Weapons	8,800
FROGs	20+
SCUDs	54
Air Force	
Personnel	80,000
Jet-Capable Airfields	26
Total Aircraft	1,400+
Total Jet Fighters	748
MIG-15/17/19s	480
MIG-21s	120
MIG-23s	46
MIG-29s	10+
Light Transports (AN-2)	250
Light Bombers (IL-28)	82
Fighter/Bombers (SU-7)	20
SU-25s	20+
Helicopters (MI-2/MI-4/MI-8/H-500)	300
Naval Forces	
Personnel	60,000
Bases	25
Total Combat Ships	650+
Patrol Frigate	1
Coastal Patrol Boats	388
Missile Attack Boats	39
Mine Warfare Boats	23
Amphibious Craft	194
Hovercraft	30
Attack Submarines	24
Midget Submarines	35+
Air Cushion Vehicles (LCPA)	50+

Figure 1: Unclassified North Korean Threat Array (Current as of June 1992)

here in Korea. The operating system for TDSS is "windows"—a system that allows decision makers to select window displays of battlefield operating systems from the most detailed lower levels to the big picture integrated with other BOSs. The BOSs feed their information into the windows in TDSS in real time, focusing on the information the theater CINC and his staff need to know—must know—to make the most effective combat decisions in a timely manner. All BOSs see the same window screens and data at the same time. TDSS is not only a dynamic decision aid, a medium to provide staff and component assessments, it's also a tool to synchronize the execution of the CINC's campaign plan.

What lessons did you learn in Ulchi-Focus Lens?

The most important lesson we learned was that our newly rewritten War Plan 5027 is executable. There's a total understanding and acceptance of the war plan's phases and the conditions for transitioning from one phase to another.

The new war plan is structured in a classic format with a few unique exceptions. Probably the most unique is the commander's intent includes conditions for changing actions—outcomes, if you will. For example, a condition might be expressed as *neutralizing* a given force, rather than *destroying* it. The conditions stated are outcome-based rather than process-based. That allows subordinate commanders to immediately understand the commander's intent fully and gives them some flexibility to adjust, where necessary, during combat to meet that intent.

Another lesson we learned during Focus Lens was that, given the plethora of intelligence sensors available, we were overwhelmed by the amount of data coming through, making it difficult, at best, to sort out the critical information bits. In the last Focus Lens, from the time something happened in a fox hole at the frontline until the time it was visible at the theater level was five hours—a change from the 31 hours of the previous year's exercise. We had corrected the previous year's time lag with data processes and technological improvements. But with the reduced time lag, we received an enormous data dump. (That indicates the staff is focusing on process as opposed to output—easily correctable by putting in filters or gates to meter the information flow.) So in Ulchi Focus, we learned the importance of picking off the right bits of information to graphically represent the battlefield from the mass of information flowing from our sensors.

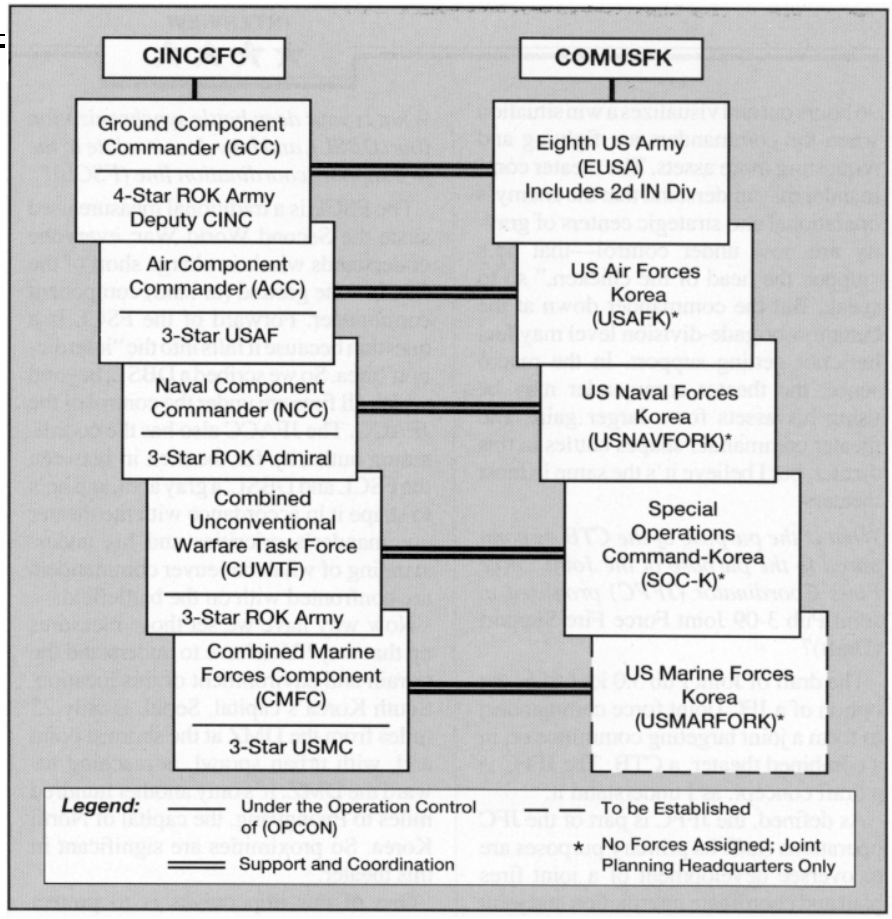

Figure 2. Two of the four "hats" General RisCassi wears are as Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Forces Command (CINCCFC) and Commander of US Forces Korea (COMUSFK). Note the combined organization of the CFC; for each component where a ROK officer is the commander, a US officer is the deputy commander and vice versa. General RisCassi also wears hats as CINC UN Command (CINCUNC) and Senior US Military Officer in Korea.

How does your Combined Targeting Board (CTB) help synchronize the deep battle?

The CTB is a centralized committee under the JFACC [joint force air component commander] that oversees the deep targeting process. It's joint and combined with members from both national forces and the various components.

The CTB receives fire support requests for deep targeting from the components and manages these within the construct of the CINC's overall campaign plan, ensuring assets are allocated to meet theater objectives. It performs this task by making recommendations to the JFACC, who's responsible for executing deep battle operations, as well as other operations under his purview.

The vehicles for the CTB's output are the SPITL [single prioritized integrated target list] and ITO [integrated tasking order], which are based on the CINC's intent—constantly bounced off the intent. (The ATO [Air Force's air tasking order] is a sub-product of the ITO.) Because the SPITL and ITO are integrated target and tasking lists, they eliminate duplicate targeting and bring the right mix of systems together synergistically.

Do the CTB's organization and process afford ground commanders the flexibility to attack deep and shape the battlefield?

Most certainly, but within the limits established by the theater commander. The GCC [ground component commander] is represented on the theater-level CTB. Thus, the field commanders' requirements are fed continuously to the CTB and, if possible, are met. If not, the issue is forwarded to the theater commander for decision.

But given the nature of this theater, the shaping is done at the theater level. Thus the theater commander looks at the battle

96 hours out and visualizes a win situation when the commanders are fighting and requesting more assets. The theater commander may understand that the enemy's operational and strategic centers of gravity are now under control—that he's "nipped the head of the chicken," so to speak. But the commander down at the battalion-brigade-division level may feel he's not getting support. In the macro sense, the theater commander may be using his assets for a larger gain. The theater commander shapes battles in this theater, but I believe it's the same in most theaters.

What is the purpose of the CTB as compared to the purpose of the Joint Force Fires Coordinator (JFFC) proposed in Joint Pub 3-09 Joint Force Fire Support (Draft)?

The draft of Joint Pub 3.0 identifies the option of a JFC [joint force commander] to form a joint targeting committee or, in a combined theater, a CTB. The JFFC is a draft concept, as I understand it.

As defined, the JFFC is part of the JFC operations staff. Its primary purposes are to oversee development of a joint fires plan and coordinate interdiction and joint fire support with other members of the joint force staff, as well as other commands. Thus, it's a theater-level instrument to ensure joint fires are apportioned in accordance with the JFC's operational needs and cross-integrate component capabilities as needed.

From a JFC perspective, several principles guide his decision on how to structure his organization. First, commanders are responsible for operations—staffs are not. Whether the JFC delegates interdiction or deep operations or retains control determines his organization. Second, whatever the architecture, the joint fires coordination instrument must meet balanced, integrated operational criteria. The CTB works in a combined theater, and I believe it's well-placed with the JFACC, particularly if the majority of assets are air assets.

What this says, then, is doctrine should not dictate a single solution for managing deep fires. As with other operational decisions, a JFC's decision should be based on factors of METT-T [mission, enemy, terrain, troops and time available]. Unity of command should be protected; therefore, the integrating body should be placed where it makes the most sense in operational terms.

What is your deep battle synchronization line (DBSL), and how does it relate to the fire support coordination line (FSCL)?

The FSCL is a traditional measure used since the Second World War; everyone understands who's in charge short of the FSCL—the ground (or land) component commander. Forward of the FSCL is a question because it falls into the "interdiction" area. So we scribed a DBSL, beyond which all fires are under the control of the JFACC. The JFACC also has the coordinating authority for the area in between the FSCL and DBSL, a gray area, and he's to shape it in accordance with the theater commander's priorities and his understanding of what maneuver commanders are confronted with on the battlefield.

Now why have we set those measures up that way? You have to understand the terrain and environment of this location. South Korea's capital, Seoul, is only 25 miles from the DMZ at the shortest point and, with urban sprawl, is reaching toward the DMZ. It's only another hundred miles to Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. So proximities are significant in this theater.

One of our imperatives is to protect Seoul from penetration by North Korean forces. So we focus the frontline field armies on the close-in battle. Therefore, we scribe the FSCL very close—closer than you'd draw in the academic environment, clearly closer than for a fight in Europe and fundamentally closer than what you saw in Operation Desert Storm.

How you shape interdiction, then, becomes very important. So in the ITO, we have systems that can shape the battlefield in areas beyond the FSCL; Army TACMS [tactical missile system] is one of those. As a consequence, our tasking order isn't selective—it includes other types of systems, ground systems, that we've given to the JFACC.

This then begs the question, "Why not change the rules that apply to the FSCL to make it a restrictive fire line and thus alleviate the need for a new control measure?" In some instances, there's a range of activity beyond the FSCL but short of the DBSL that's of fundamental concern to various component commanders—sort of a zone where all should be able to target high-payoff targets based on their individual requirements. We didn't want to make this targeting process overly restrictive or untimely. Thus between the FSCL and DBSL, we gave the JFACC coordinating authority over all fires and devised a streamlined or quick-fire channel parallel to the CTB's to manage joint fires within this band.

With the large number of North Korean hardened artillery sites (HARTS) along the DMZ, how do you plan to fight and win the counterfire battle?

The HARTS make counterfire a bit more difficult but still winnable. We have munitions capable of destroying North Korean HARTS. And contrary to what many people believe, the North Koreans can't fire out of those sites—they must move out into firing positions. Therein lies their vulnerability, for once they move, they're subject to our air dimension, one of the strongest in this theater.

Our greatest challenge, however, is simply negating or destroying the large number of North Korean artillery systems, HART or mobile. If the north attacked, it would take synchronized counterbattery and air power to decimate a majority of those systems.

What message would you like to send to Redlegs worldwide?

Korea isn't the only threatened theater in the world or, necessarily, the one most likely to see conflict. However, forces here have a strong training program in a unique theater. I encourage you, as part of the best Field Artillery in the world, to seek an assignment in Korea.

General Robert W. RisCassi is the Commander-in-Chief (CINC) of the United Nations Command, CINC of the Combined Forces Command and Commander of the US Forces Korea in the Republic of Korea. He has served in a number of key assignments, including as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, Director of the Joint Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, all in Washington, D.C.; Deputy Commanding General of the Training and Doctrine Command and Commanding General of the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; Commander of the 9th Infantry Division (Motorized), Fort Lewis, Washington; Assistant Division Commander of the 8th Infantry Division (Mechanized) in Germany; and Assistant Commandant of the Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia.